

THE CAVALIER DAILY

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Thursday, September 10, 2026

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NEWS

This week in-brief

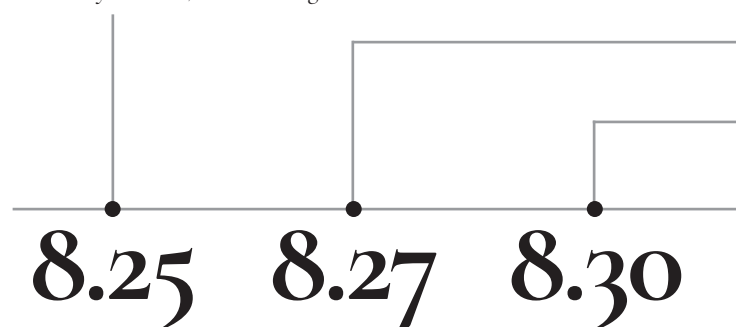
CD News Staff

Acampora emphasizes human skills amid technological environment

Christa Acampora, dean of the College and Graduate School of Arts and Sciences and professor of philosophy, delivered the First Lecture to students on the Lawn Monday morning.

The approximately 30-minute event was part of the 2026 Wahoo Welcome schedule, and while the lecture was required for College students in the Class of 2030, all University community members were welcome to attend the event.

Acampora shared the importance of human skills and capabilities in a world where artificial intelligence's use has grown. Over the past few years, many employers are using AI to fill traditional entry-level jobs, but Acampora said that a University education will teach students about themselves and aid them in developing human skills like leadership, creativity and judgment to meet employer needs. According to Acampora, judgment, discernment and ethical imagination are all capabilities humans possess and are derived from our ability to think, feel and imagine.



U.Va. scholars push back on report alleging politicized scholarship

The "Report on the State of Scholarship in the Humanities and the Humanistic Social Sciences," also known as the "Vanderbilt Report," was chaired by New York University philosopher Paul Boghossian and explored six disciplines — philosophy, anthropology, sociology, history, literary studies and music studies — for evidence that political considerations and biases have taken the place of traditional scholarly standards.

At the University, several faculty took issue with the report, saying there was not appropriate evidence for some of the claims made. In a statement to The Cavalier Daily, Antonia LoLordo, interim chair of the Corcoran Department of Philosophy and George C. and Clare F. Downing Memorial Professor of Philosophy, said she was skeptical of the report's central claims, specifying that although four of the 10 authors are philosophers, their conclusions do not reflect a consensus across the humanities discipline.

Honor introduces proposal to change sanction appeal process

During their first meeting of the academic year, the Honor Committee introduced a new proposal to change the appeals process for students. The proposal includes the addition of a governing body that would oversee the appeals process and decide if a student's appeal is deemed legitimate.

The proposal was introduced by Walter Blessing, chair of the policies and procedures sub-committee and fourth-year College representative. Blessing explained at the meeting how the current appeals process, as stated in the bylaws, exists to ensure that if the Committee fails to comply with their bylaws, the decision may get appealed by the student to the Committee.

Federal funding uncertainty sparks fewer admissions to doctoral programs

The country's more than 300 research universities are defined by their ability to produce research doctorates and collectively receive \$65 billion from the federal government each fiscal year. The Trump administration, however, has made attempts to lessen the federal government's financial support for American higher education. The response from higher education institutions has been to reduce the size of many Ph.D. programs — by a factor of around 15 percent, based on data from a group of Association of American Universities member institutions.

When Rebecca Weinstein, Graduate Arts and Sciences student and president of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Council, entered the University to pursue her Ph.D. in Environmental Sciences, she said she did not anticipate that she or her peers would need to remain teaching assistants as they completed their dissertations or need to share money among their lab groups.

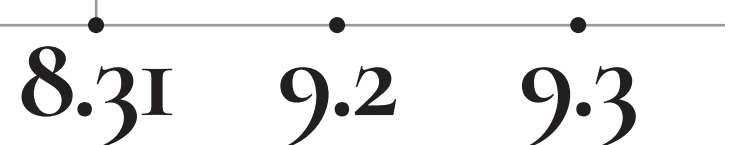
Phil Trella, associate vice provost and director of the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs, confirmed that preliminary data shows that, after a period of climbing Ph.D. enrollment, fewer students are applying to the University's Ph.D. programs, and the programs themselves are becoming smaller.

University Computer Science department remains hopeful in the age of AI

According to National Student Clearinghouse, undergraduate enrollment in traditional information and computer science degrees at four-year institutions fell by 8.1 percent in the fall of 2025 compared to fall 2024. However, at the University, the computer science department has not seen a notable change in enrollment for its bachelors, masters or PhD programs.

Entering the national conversation on computer science enrollment, Mark Sherriff, University associate department chair of Computer Science, said that fluctuations are not new. Sherriff said computer science has experienced significant increases and decreases in enrollment throughout its history, including surges during the dot-com boom — a time of huge technological change — and at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since enrollment grew so rapidly during those periods, Sherriff said the recent decline may represent a correction from unusually high enrollment rather than a fundamental shift away from computer science. At the same time, Sherriff said there is a misconception that a computer science degree is becoming less valuable because large language models can now generate code. While coding is part of computer science, he said the foundation of the discipline is problem-solving and understanding the broader systems in which code operates.



School of Data Science announces Assured Enrollment program

The School of Data Science is changing how first-year students can gain admission for the 2026-27 academic year. Assured Enrollment allows first-year students interested in data science to secure a spot in the Bachelor of Science in Data Science program without having to participate in the traditional admissions that previous classes completed.

First-year students who complete any 24 credits by the end of their first year — including two prerequisite courses — and fill out an interest form will have a spot reserved in the major without having to commit to entering it. According to Degi Betcher, director of admissions and recruiting for the School of Data Science, students who complete the interest form will be notified when the intent to enroll form — a separate, secondary form — becomes available, which is planned for sometime this month. The interest form is open to all first-year students now, and the intent to enroll form is set to have a deadline of Nov. 1.

What's on the ballot this November in Virginia?

Charlottesville residents will have the opportunity to vote in two federal elections and on three constitutional amendments

Abigail Larkin | Senior Writer

Early voting for this year's mid-term elections begins Sept. 18 in the Commonwealth, when Virginians can cast their votes in federal elections for the Commonwealth's U.S. Senator and members of the U.S. House of Representatives. Charlottesville residents can vote for the U.S. Representative of Virginia's fifth congressional district — which includes Charlottesville and parts of Albemarle County. Virginians will also have the opportunity to weigh in on amendments to the Virginia Constitution affirming the right to reproductive freedom and same-sex marriage, as well as an amendment granting convicted felons the right to vote upon their release. University students may register to vote in Charlottesville or Albemarle County with their University address.

Primaries for the federal elections were held Aug. 4. While there was no Democratic primary for the U.S. Senate race, Bert Mizusawa, a retired major general and senior Pentagon executive, beat out two challengers in the Virginia Republican primary — securing 51.49 percent of the vote and the Republican nomination.

In Virginia primary races for the fifth district's House election, both general election candidates handily beat out challengers and won their respective primaries, with candidate Tom Perriello winning 76.76 percent of the vote in the Democratic primary, and Rep. John McGuire (R-VA5) taking 84.24 percent of votes in the Republican primary.

Here is a closer look at what is on the ballot this November in Virginia's elections for the U.S. Senate, U.S. House of Representatives and amendments to the Virginia Constitution.

U.S. Senate

Mark Warner (VA-D), three-term senior U.S. senator from Virginia and former governor of the Commonwealth, will face Republican nominee Bert Mizusawa in the election for Senator of the Commonwealth. Mizusawa formerly served as a national security advisor to President Trump in 2016, and has secured the president's nomination in the election.

Warner announced July 24 that this would be his final re-election bid, and his campaign has focused on affordability, lowering health-care costs and planning for a future economy impacted by artificial intelligence. He has been endorsed by Gov. Abigail Spanberger (D) and other Democratic leaders in the state.

Mizusawa's campaign is also centered around increasing affordability, though with a different approach than Warner, pledging to oppose any tax increase for Virginians. Mizusawa has also said he will work to decrease the national debt, defend military and veterans' benefits and strengthen the border.

The election will likely result in a Warner victory, with Pollsmax predicting that the Senator will win the election by nearly 20 percentage points, and the Center for Politics ranking it as a "safe D."

U.S. House of Representatives

Elections are occurring across all of the Commonwealth's 11 House districts. Charlottesville lies in Virginia's fifth congressional district, where democratic nominee Tom Perriello will face Republican incumbent John McGuire in November's general election.

The race for the House is shaping up to be much more competitive than the Senate — Pollsmax showed McGuire with a 7 percentage point lead over Perriello as of Aug. 1 — but the Center for Politics still rates the fifth district as a "likely Republican" victory. The predicted deficit mirrors Gov. Abigail Spanberger's (D) loss to Winsome Earle-Sears in the district by just over 7 percentage points in last November's gubernatorial election.

McGuire has represented Virginia's fifth district since Jan. 3, 2025, and is seeking his second congressional term. He is a former Navy SEAL and previously represented Virginia's 10th district in the State Senate from January 2024 to January 2025. McGuire has been endorsed by President Trump and according to his congressional website, he is focused on "keeping costs low for families," decreasing the size of the federal government and supporting the nation's agriculture base and "robust" infrastructure development.

Periello formerly represented Virginia's fifth district from 2009 to 2011, and in the time since his Congressional term has worked as a non-profit executive and diplomat, serving as the U.S. special envoy to Sudan from February 2024 to January 2025. His 2008 victory in the fifth district — in which he unseated six-term incumbent Virgil Goode — was called an upset by Time Magazine, and he remains the last Democrat to hold the seat 15 years after the end of his term.

Periello has been endorsed by Spanberger, as well as local Charlottesville and Albemarle leadership, including Charlottesville Mayor Juandiego Wade and the



KAYLA MOORE | THE CAVALIER DAILY

Election day at Trailblazer Elementary School, photographed Nov. 4, 2025.

Albemarle County Board of Supervisors. His campaign priorities include "saving families money" by ending tariffs and ending the war in Iran. Periello also vows to take on corruption, bring "sanity" back to Washington and fight to increase the affordability of healthcare, childcare, housing and retirement.

Commonwealth Constitutional Amendments

Commonwealth ballots in November will have three "ballot questions" pertaining to proposed amendments to the Virginia Constitution.

Ballot Question 1 asks voters to vote "yes" or "no" to adding an amendment to the Virginia Constitution's Bill of Rights that would explicitly protect "the freedom to make personal decisions" about reproductive healthcare such as birth control, prenatal care, childbirth, abortion, miscarriages and fertility. The amendment would also protect doctors and nurses from "being punished" for their role in these decisions, and bans third-trimester abortions except in the cases where the pregnancy is not viable or threatens the patient's health.

Currently, the Virginia Constitution does not explicitly grant or ban the right to reproductive freedom. If the amendment passes it would solidify the right for Virginians in the wake of the legal gray area that has existed since the 2022 overturning of Roe v. Wade,

which ended federal protections for abortion and sent the question of reproductive freedom back to state governments to decide their laws on the matter.

Ballot Question 2 asks Virginians to vote to amend the Constitution to affirm the right to same-sex marriage. Voting "yes" to the amendment would remove a current provision in the state's Constitution that defines marriage as "only a union between one man and one woman."

The ban is currently unenforceable due to the Supreme Court case Obergefell v. Hodges, which grants the right to same-sex marriage federally. However, if Obergefell were ever to be overturned, the amendment would guarantee that the right to marriage for all would still continue to exist in Virginia.

Ballot Question 3 concerns the right of released felons to vote. Under the Virginia Constitution, once a person is convicted of a felony, they lose the right to vote for the rest of their life, unless the right is restored by the governor. In January, a federal court ruled that individuals convicted of a felony only lose their voting rights if they committed a felony recognized at common law in 1870.

A vote "yes" on the ballot question would create an amendment to the Virginia Constitution that would grant the right to vote to felons upon their release from incarceration.

Sales Tax

Residents of Albemarle County will have the opportunity to vote for a 1 percent increase in sales tax in the County to help fund school construction projects.

How to Vote

Residents of the Commonwealth can vote early in-person in these elections and for the amendments from Sept. 18 to Oct. 31, and can request a mail-in ballot until Oct. 23. The final day to register to vote is Oct. 23, but residents can still request a provisional ballot on Election day — Nov. 3.

If students would like to register to vote in Virginia, they must fill out a Virginia Voter Registration Application — which can be downloaded from the Virginia Department of Elections website — and mail it to their local voter registration office. Students can also register online, via an online registration form on the Virginia Department of Elections Website, or obtain a voter registration form from their local voter registration office, which can be found by entering their address into the Virginia Department of Elections portal, and fill it out in person. Dorms and other student housing addresses are acceptable to list on the voter registration form.

University classes will not be held on election day, and The Cavalier Daily will cover election day updates.

U.Va. emergency department among most expensive in Virginia

The University Medical Center had the highest self-pay cost for many in-patient diagnostics relative to other non-profit Commonwealth trauma centers

Michael Racz | Senior Associate

Nearly half of all U.S. adults reported difficulty affording healthcare costs, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation. Additionally, 36 percent of Americans and 75 percent of uninsured Americans under the age of 65 reported delaying needed medical care because of the cost.

In comparison to other nonprofit level 1 trauma centers in Virginia, the University Medical Center had the highest self-pay rate — the amount charged to patients who pay out-of-pocket rather than through insurance — for Emergency Department facility fees and was among the most expensive for other treatment services, including CT scans and various blood tests, based on published pricing data.

According to the KFF, the average facility fee — the cost for being seen in the ED that includes things like hospital overhead costs, nursing staff and equipment — has risen from \$113 in 2004 to \$713 nationwide in 2021, or a 531 percent increase over 17 years.

Additionally, when comparing the gross cost of these services, the University Medical Center ranks above average when compared to the five nonprofit trauma centers in the Commonwealth. Its self-pay discounts, however, were not substantial enough to prevent it from remaining among the most expensive hospitals for care for self-pay patients.

When patients delay receiving preventive care because of anticipated health care costs — such as for vaccinations or chronic disease management for conditions like asthma, diabetes and hypertension — they may end up requiring more emergency care, which is often significantly more expensive than preventive care.

Due to the costly nature of ED visits, this article provides a breakdown of the cost of different ED and hospital fees at the University Medical Center alongside other similar hospitals to examine how costs compare between the other nonprofit level 1 trauma centers in Virginia. Facilities for comparison include Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital, Virginia Commonwealth University Medical Center, Sentara Norfolk General Hospital and Inova Fairfax Hospital.

Health care cost breakdowns are based on “self-pay” rates. The costs in this article do not represent the cost to insured patients, or patients receiving financial assistance from the health system. They are also broken down by the “gross charge” — which is the charge before any discounts are applied.

Self-pay and gross charge rates are being used as a comparative measure in this article due to the complex and wide variation in insurance reimbursement and coverage that exist amongst insurance providers and their plans.

Additionally, all of the nonprofit level 1 trauma centers offer varying discount rates to patients who are self-pay and various financial assistance programs detailed throughout this article.

Facility fee

The facility fee is a baseline rate that all patients must pay when they present to the ED. The fee is not based on what tests or imaging studies a provider orders, but instead the severity of a patient's condition. ER visit costs are typically divided into five levels, with level 1 representing the lowest-acuity visits, which may include treatment for a minor cut, and level 5 representing the highest-acuity visits, such as those involving a heart attack. Facility fee information was taken from the master price list on the University Medical Center's website. This data is required to be published by the No Surprises Act.

According to the master price list, the University Medical Center charges the highest self-pay rate — what a patient actually owes after each hospital's discount is applied — at every facility fee billing level. Its combined gross charges are 24.1 percent higher than the average of the other four level 1 trauma centers, while its self-pay prices are 65.4 percent higher, likely due to a smaller self-pay discount.

At level 1, gross charges are 21.2 percent higher than the other four facilities and self-pay prices 61.3 percent higher. At level 4, the differences are 17.1 percent and 55.5 percent. The largest gap is at level 5, where the gross charge is 30.1 percent higher and the self-pay price is 73.7 percent higher.

Common ED medications

According to the National Hospital Ambulatory Medical Care Survey published in 2022, ondansetron and ketorolac are among the most common medications in American EDs. VCU had the highest gross and discounted cash prices for both medications. Carilion had the lowest discounted cash price for both medications and the lowest gross price for ondansetron, while Sentara had the lowest gross price for ketorolac.

The University Medical Center had lower overall medication prices than the other level 1 trauma centers. Combined, its discounted cash prices were 40.5 percent lower than the average of the other four hospitals, while its gross charges were 54.9 percent lower.

Prices varied by medication. The University Medical Center's discounted cash price for ondansetron — a common medication used to treat nausea and vomiting — is 36.6 percent below the average of the other four trauma centers, while its gross price

was 51.7 percent lower. Its discounted price for ketorolac — an NSAID that is commonly described as a stronger version of ibuprofen — was 43.6 percent below the average, while its gross price was 57.4 percent lower.

Common ED laboratory studies

According to Eric Swensen, U.Va. Health's public information officer, many ED medical tests include collecting basic blood work and other laboratory studies. Some of these include tests such as Basic Metabolic Panels, Comprehensive Metabolic Panels and Complete Blood Counts. These laboratory studies are not included in the facility fee.

The following cost estimates for the common aforementioned laboratory studies were pulled from MyChart or Carepricer cost estimators available on each hospital's respective website. These cost estimators — unlike the fees on the master price list as described in the facility fee section — include associated fees with each laboratory test such as provider and general hospital fees.

The University Medical Center charges self-pay patients \$101 for a CBC, \$163 for a BMP, \$196 for a CMP and \$55 for a urinalysis. Before self-pay discounts are applied, the University Medical Center costs for laboratory studies are either on par with or cheaper than other trauma centers in the Commonwealth, but when the self-pay discounts are included, the University Medical Center becomes the most expensive for a CBC and BMP and among the most expensive of the level 1 trauma centers for a CMP and urinalysis.

The University Medical Center's self-pay prices for CBC, BMP and urinalysis are 50.2 percent, 29.0 percent and 32.1 percent higher, respectively, than the averages of the other four hospitals. Its CMP price is 39.3 percent lower, although that comparison is heavily influenced by Inova's high outlier price of \$764.

Excluding Inova, the University Medical Center's combined self-pay prices for the four tests are 15.9 percent higher than the three-hospital average, despite its gross charges being 17.8 percent lower than the other three facilities. This difference is likely due to a lower self-pay discount applied to the University Medical Center's charges.

X-ray imaging

According to Swensen, imaging studies in the ED are typically ordered based on findings from a patient's clinical evaluation that warrant further diagnostic testing. Below is a breakdown of some of the most common diagnostic X-ray examinations performed in the ED and their respective costs at University Medical Center compared

with those at other level 1 trauma centers.

The University Medical Center's self-pay prices are 12.4 percent lower than the average for chest X-rays and 3.3 percent lower for wrist X-rays, while knee, tibia/fibula and forearm X-rays are 41.9 percent, 5.7 percent and 24.8 percent higher than the other four hospitals, respectively.

Overall, the combined self-pay prices for the aforementioned exams were 12.1 percent higher at the University Medical Center than the average of the other four hospitals, however, the gross charges were 13.3 percent lower than the average of the X-ray imaging from the other four facilities.

Computed tomography and ultrasound imaging

As of 2012, nearly 17 percent of ED visits at the Mayo Clinic ED included a CT scan. CT scans are used to gain more elaborate and comprehensive imaging than X-rays can provide. Among the five nonprofit level 1 trauma centers, the self-pay discounted rate for two of the four imaging studies — CT abdomen/pelvis with contrast, CT chest with contrast, ultrasound of the abdomen and an echocardiogram — was the highest at the University Medical Center. CT scan gross charges similarly continued to be in the upper range of the five centers in the Commonwealth.

For a CT head without contrast at the University Medical Center, the self-pay discounted rate for the study is \$1,529, and a CT abdomen/pelvis with contrast is \$4,426. The cost of a CT abdomen/pelvis with contrast at the University Medical Center is \$2,127 higher than the cheapest trauma center offering that study — Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital.

Across the aforementioned imaging studies, the University Medical Center had a gross cost for the studies that was 11.3 percent higher than the average of the other four facilities. Additionally, the average self-pay price was 40.6 percent higher than that of the average of the other facilities.

For example, echocardiograms at the University Medical Center had an average self-pay cost that was 59.7 percent higher than the average of the other hospitals, and its gross cost for the same study was 26.7 percent higher than the average of the study at the other hospitals. A similar reality was true for CT abdomen/pelvis with contrast, where the self-pay price was 49.4 percent higher and the gross charge was 17.5 percent higher than the average of the other four facilities.

Affordability options for patients

The above listed costs are for self-pay patients, and they do not account for insurance coverage by major insur-

ance plans. The listed trauma centers have cost estimation tools on their respective websites for patients to input shoppable medical services and their respective insurance plans to know an out-of-pocket cost estimate.

According to Swensen, one of the best ways for students at the University to reduce health care costs is to ensure patients only visit the ED when a true emergency is occurring. SHW provides students with a document to help them determine what kind of facility is the best for them to seek medical care at based on their condition. The document is also available on the Student Health and Wellness website.

Swensen also said that U.Va. Health is a safety-net hospital, meaning it serves patients regardless of their ability to pay for care. Swensen added that U.Va. Health has several assistance programs in place for patients who require financial assistance.

For the University Medical Center, patients also receive a self-pay discount and are on the Amount Generally Billed system. The AGB system ensures patients on financial assistance will not be charged unfeasibly high rates. Additionally, any patient whose household income is at or below 200 percent of the national poverty line or has assets totalling less than \$50,000 will be eligible for charity care.

The VCU Medical Center has the same policy of providing a self-pay discount and using the AGB system. They also have the same charity care threshold as the University Medical Center. Inova provides free medically necessary and emergency care to patients whose income level is at or below 400 percent of the federal poverty line. Additionally, uninsured Inova patients who receive financial assistance are on an AGB system, in which they are only charged the average rate paid by public and private insurance companies based on their negotiated rates.

For Carilion, uninsured patients who self-pay are eligible for a 65 percent discount on hospital charges. Additionally, any patient whose household income is at or below 300 percent of the national poverty line or has less than \$25,000 in assets is eligible to receive charity care — which includes all emergency or medically necessary care. Carilion, like Inova, follows the AGB system. Sentara provides a 50 percent self-pay discount. They also have the same charity care threshold as Carilion. Sentara also follows the AGB system.

English department considers AI's place in the classroom

English department faculty are working to retain the academic goals of reading, writing and literature classes as students' access to generative AI increases

Lily Kostro | Staff Writer

As generative artificial intelligence becomes a more pressing discussion in academia, professors, students and instructors have faced both the implementation of and attempts to remove AI from the classroom. For the University's English department, some professors have chosen assignments that utilize AI in writing, while others take the approach of completely eliminating students' access to generative AI in their writing process.

Anna Brickhouse, Linden Kent Memorial Professor of English and American Studies, said in a statement to *The Cavalier Daily* that in response to students' access to generative AI, she and her colleagues have had continuous discussions regarding the significant impact of AI on the field.

"Our department has a venerable history of scholarship on the material book, an ancient technology that remains essential to the deepest experiences of reading," Brickhouse wrote. "We are a department of the book, and the AI moment has helped to clarify that basic value [on the physical book]."

Brickhouse said to combat generative AI, there has been an emphasis among her colleagues on screen-free reading and writing within the English department. James Seitz, English professor and director of the Writing and Rhetoric Program — which offers first-year writing and upper-level courses in writing and rhetoric — also said in a statement to *The Cavalier Daily* that the use of AI in writing classes defeats the benefit of the course for students.

"I believe AI will have much to offer students in other endeavors, but when it comes to reading and writing, [there is] no substitute for doing it yourself," Seitz wrote. "To give reading and writing to AI would leave our population intellectually impoverished."

For fourth-year College student Amelia Johnson, AI has not had a place in any of her English classes over the last two years. An English major, Johnson said that when she entered the University in 2023, there was no clear instruction from professors regarding how to utilize AI in her classes but that professors in the past couple of years have implemented explicit rules against it.

"Most of [my classes] are tech-free classes, so I can't have my phone out or anything in class ... I do all the writing by hand, and I get course packets for the reading," Johnson said. "Basically everything is analog, and I have found that to be really helpful ... it definitely has forced me to become a much better



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Bryan Hall, photographed Sept. 9, 2026.

writer."

Johnson said she is currently taking a class with English Prof. Jane Alison who has opted out of having an online Canvas page for the course. This is due to Alison's worry that a student's work could be uploaded somewhere else online after being submitted to Canvas, Johnson explained.

Not all classes in the English department are shying entirely away from technology and AI, however. Seitz stated that some professors are allowing students to use AI as an attempt to explore its possibilities and shortcomings, especially its failures at writing. Mana Iyer, third-year Commerce and College student, experienced this approach in her first-year writing requirement course two years ago.

The first-year writing requirement is an English class that University undergraduate students take during their first year, and cannot be tested or opted out of. The goal of the course, according to the Arts & Sciences Writing and Rhetoric Program website, is to focus on student writing and develop skills that benefit the student beyond their college years. This includes participating in critical inquiry, developing rhetorical agility, engaging

diverse communities and attending to writing as a process.

Iyer said that one of her assignments in this course offered students the option to utilize generative AI for writing a paper, which the students were expected to edit themselves and include a disclaimer and reflection on the process of using AI. She noted that the purpose of this was for students to see whether AI could replicate the human imagination, and that the paper demonstrated that AI could eventually be utilized to mimic the human mind.

"The kind of thought experiment there [with the assignment] was whether AI can imagine or not, and how that compare[s] with human imagination," Iyer said. "I think professors as a whole are maybe more thoughtful about what AI means for the future of thought."

Gabby Kiser, a graduate instructor and Ph.D. candidate in the English department, has previously taught first-year writing requirement courses and said that when she began teaching in the fall of 2024 during a semester-long writing pedagogy course, there were no discussions about approaching AI with students.

"AI just wasn't a priority [when

becoming trained], so I wasn't really prepared for it," Kiser said. "When I came into the classroom, I only had 10 students my first semester. Because I wasn't trained to keep an eye out for it, I don't know if my students were using AI. I like to think they weren't."

Kiser said that now AI has grown into a much larger discussion in the English department, and in response to generative AI, the Writing and Rhetoric Program has urged instructors to move all student writing to be done completely in-person. This would entail in-class timed essays taking the place of take home essays, and writing assignments being done only during scheduled class times.

However, Kiser said she likely would not require all classroom writing to be in-person, with concerns about whether assignments done completely in-person or on paper would mimic writing skills required in students' potential careers, internships or academic careers. She added that the first-year writing requirement should help students develop writing skills that can be catered to different audiences and for different academic or career purposes, and that having writing only done on paper can be

limiting.

"I would like to think that the first-year writing requirements don't just prepare students for college assignments, but for other kinds of communications," Kiser said. "I think that we can broaden our horizons a little bit so that we are not [having] every ENWR ... preparing students for this kind of paper they don't want to write ... but for other kinds of writing."

English Professor Courtney Watts said in a statement to *The Cavalier Daily* that many students are starting to feel that using generative AI is their only way to "keep up" in writing-focused classes.

"AI is definitely having a big impact across UVA's writing classes. Writing can be hard, even painful," Watts wrote. "Regardless of how well a given essay turns out, practicing writing makes us better at both writing and thinking, and the act of doing things the 'hard way' builds our capacity to take on daunting tasks."

Watts also said that the use of AI in writing-focused classes prevents students from growing as writers, and that she and her colleagues hope that students are willing to put the work in themselves for the benefit of their own education.

LIFE

The Ozempidemic — is social media telling the full story?

University community members who research, prescribe and take GLP-1 medications share how the development impacts healthcare and fitness narratives

Dana Douglas | Assistant Literary Editor

Editor's note: This article makes reference to disordered eating habits.

"If I get one more GLP-1 weight loss ad," said fitness influencer Allison Martens, venting to the camera in a TikTok video posted April 21. She followed up by rhetorically asking, "Have we ever tried working out? Have we ever tried moving our body? Have we ever tried eating less?"

Martens' clip is merely one example of countless content with messages condemning the use of Glucagon-like peptide-1 agonist therapy. However, her oppositional stance is not unanimous among social media creators.

"It's interesting to me that people love to hate on people taking GLP-1 when the reality is we've already tried everything else. Whatever worked for you, we've already tried it. And we tried 14 other things too," said lifestyle influencer Kelsey Martinez in a TikTok posted in July 2025.

Martinez, too, joins thousands of others posting positive first-hand experiences with GLP-1 treatment. With so much representation both supporting and condemning GLP-1 medication, much of the general public is left struggling to understand it fully.

GLP-1 agonist therapy is a treatment designed to mimic naturally-occurring GLP-1 — a hormone produced by the small intestine that helps regulate blood glucose levels. Often, it is prescribed to patients with type 2 diabetes to help regulate their blood sugar and signal to the pancreas to release insulin and produce less glucagon.

Also often, it is prescribed to stimulate weight loss in patients with obesity by slowing digestion and amplifying fullness cues. Since the Food and Drug Administration's approval of the medication to treat type 2 diabetes and obesity in 2005, it has grown exponentially in accessibility, and consequently, in public discourse.

According to Forbes, one in eight Americans are currently on some form of GLP-1, and by 2030, it is likely that upwards of 30 million will be using it. Many have taken to the media-driven slang term "Ozempidemic," and charge the drug's recent popularity with the resurgence of diet culture.

To strain the surplus of information about GLP-1 medication circulating on social media, The Cavalier Daily spoke to those on the frontlines of the phenomenon — University medical professionals and a student prescribed GLP-1 — to uncover what

this development actually looks like for the future of weight management, diabetes treatment and American healthcare as a whole.

According to Dr. Catherine Varney, Obesity Medicine Director at UVA Health, the development of GLP-1 medication represents a momentous breakthrough, not only for patients, but for the broader narrative of obesity in the medical profession.

"[Obesity] is finally being recognized as [the] chronic disease that it is," Varney said. "For decades, well, for all of history, obesity has been viewed as a lack of willpower, a moral failing upon people."

According to Varney, GLP-1s are chipping away at the stigma often attached to obesity and redefining it to what it actually is — a medical condition resulting from genetics, epigenetics and physiological resistance to weight loss.

Unfortunately, Varney shared that this breakthrough in narrative arrives with its own host of misconceptions, beginning with the tendency of many folks to refer to all GLP-1 treatments under the blanket term "Ozempic." However, Varney clarified that versions of the same medication must be branded differently based on their intended use.

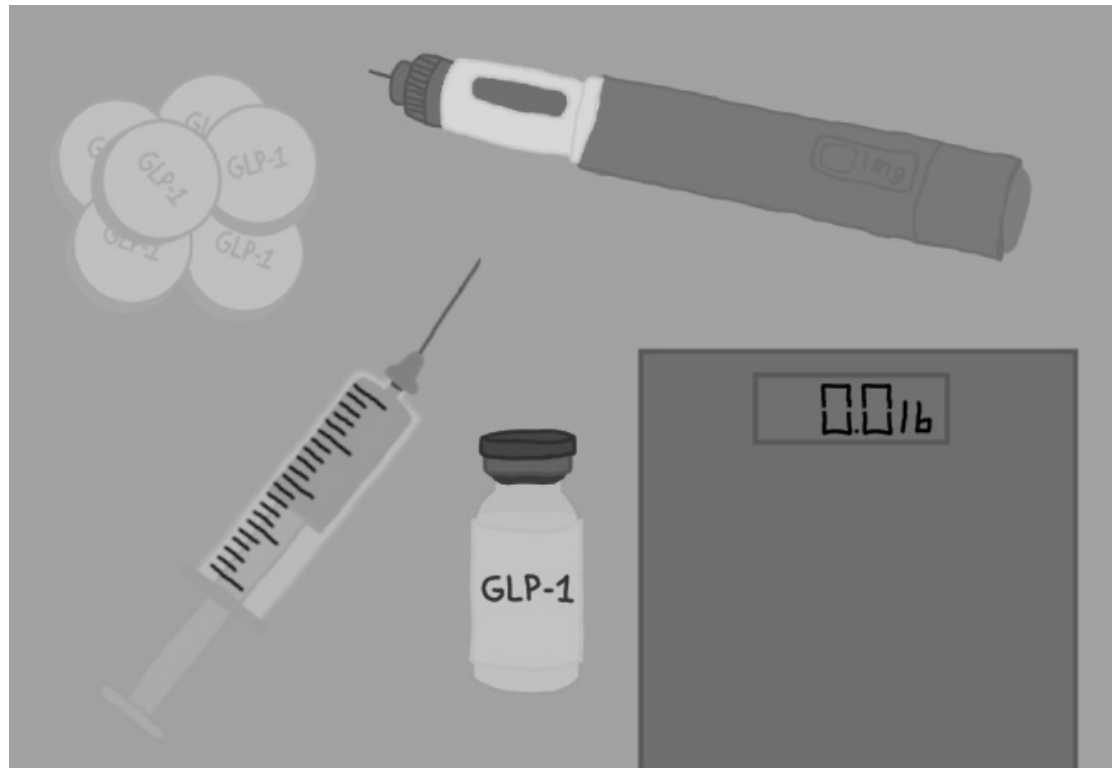
Ozempic and Mounjaro are GLP-1 brands used exclusively to treat diabetic patients, while Wegovy and Zepbound are specifically prescribed to support weight loss. This distinction, she said, is primarily necessary for insurance companies — most are willing to cover GLP-1 treatment for type 2 diabetes but not obesity, a standard she believes is misinformed.

Varney also shared that misinformation circulating on the internet indicates gaps in the general public's understanding of these medications. When asked about the largest misconception surrounding GLP-1 treatments, Varney's answer was immediate.

"That they're the easy way out," Varney said. "If I was on blood pressure medications ... nobody would look at me for taking a blood pressure medicine and say, 'Hmm, that's the easy way out, to take the blood pressure pill,' right?"

Enter fourth-year Education student Elise Bowen, who began taking Ozempic just three weeks ago as a tool to help manage her type 1 diabetes. Though the drug is currently only FDA-approved to treat type 2 diabetes, Bowen's doctor had success prescribing it for previous type 1 cases.

In her first 14 days on the treat-



PRATHA RAVANI | THE CAVALIER DAILY

ment, Bowen's Glucose Management Indicator — which she said is recommended to be below 7.0 — dropped from a 7.6 to a 7.2 after 90 days of stagnancy.

Still, while she has seen exceptional results, Bowen identified concerns with GLP-1 use being normalized for extreme cosmetic weight loss, represented particularly by celebrities and social media users.

"I think where the real issue [is, is] seeing celebrities taking [GLP-1] and becoming these stick-thin versions of themselves, because then it loses the meaning of Ozempic, which is to become a healthier version of yourself and focus on wellness in your life," Bowen said.

Dr. Zhenqi Liu, James M. Moss Professor of Diabetes and former chief of the Division of Endocrinology and Metabolism at UVA Health, echoed some of Bowen's apprehensions about the medication.

"The concern is that these medications could reinforce the idea that thinness equals health and shift the conversation from treating obesity and metabolic disease toward pursuing an arbitrary body size," Liu said. "That would be an unfortunate direction for medicine."

Bowen, who noted that women in the type 1 diabetes community can be susceptible to disordered eating habits, also believes that would be an unfortunate direction for medicine.

"I think a lot of women end up in really terrible cycles of eating disor-

ders throughout their lives with type 1 diabetes, because they're so focused on management. And so I think it's important to factor that in when you're talking about [GLP-1 treatment] ... because yes, it is going to be a really great drug for those who need it, but there is also that element of, 'How are we creating healthy eating habits for people, and is it sustainable to eat this little in the long term?'"

In Varney's sector of medicine, the answer to whether GLP-1 use at large creates healthy, sustainable habits, is yes. In her role primarily treating patients with obesity, Varney shared that disordered eating correlated with GLP-1 use is a prospect she rarely encounters.

"I've seen thousands of patients, and so I would say I could count on one-to-two hands how many times that's been an issue ... I don't think [GLP-1 medication] is driving an increase [in] eating disorders," Varney said.

What is of Varney's concern, however, is the potential of nutrient deficiency in patients taking the medication. While they may be eating a healthy, balanced diet, they may not be consuming enough in quantity to meet their nutritional needs.

With their varying perspectives and areas of expertise, what Varney, Bowen and Liu consistently agree on is that the biggest dilemma associated with GLP-1 medication is the ambiguous narrative surrounding it. Varney and Liu see this play out online and

within their own profession, while for Bowen, it is something she has had to address within herself as GLP-1 treatment has changed from a pop culture figment to a part of her daily life.

"I posted something ... a year ago where I was like, 'Hot take of the day — everybody needs to stop taking GLP-1s, they look entirely too thin,'" Bowen said. "But it really is different when you see the effects of how it's affecting your daily lifestyle. And so maybe it's also a narrative that I've had to shift for myself."

As Liu continues to research GLP-1 medications and investigate the lingering unknowns — for example, he finds that experts still need "considerably more research" to fully understand exercise alongside GLP-1 use — he maintains the call for a culture shift relative to the general understanding of fitness.

Like most phenomena, he regards most facets of the "Ozempidemic" with nuance. Promising, yes. Life-changing for many, yes. But what should be kept at the root of all healthcare, Liu emphasized, is function.

"Ultimately, I think the field needs to move from a weight-centric paradigm to a health- and function-centric paradigm," Liu said. "GLP-1 receptor agonist therapy is an important therapeutic advance, but it should be integrated with nutrition and exercise rather than viewed as a replacement for them."

Conmole cooks up the perfect evening out

Between addictive flavors and excellent service, Conmole is a Charlottesville must-try

Ingrid Gay | Life Editor

As a fourth-year student grappling with my encroaching departure from Charlottesville, it is my goal to experience as much of the city as possible before May comes around — including the dozens of highly praised restaurants within city limits.

One of the first reservations I made was at Conmole, an Oaxacan restaurant in Belmont, about a 15-minute drive from Central Grounds.

Literally translated as “with mole,” Conmole centers its menu on mole, a traditional cuisine of Mexico’s Oaxaca region known for its blend of chilies, nuts, spices and even cocoa to create a complex flavor for any dish.

Whether for a meal with your family or a special night out with friends who have defined your experience on Grounds, I can easily say that Conmole is a vibrant, must-try restaurant for every fourth-year’s pre-graduation bucket list.

I embarked to Conmole early the night before classes started with my best friend Marty and my boyfriend Drew. Although the storefront is

small, Conmole’s vibrant red exterior helps it stand out amongst the other restaurants on Hinton Avenue.

Shortly after getting settled into our seats, our server arrived. He explained that most dishes at Conmole are shared plates and recommended our trio get four to six dishes, providing concise yet detailed descriptions of each section of the menu.

After much deliberation, we decided to get four dishes. For our starter, Drew selected the Tamale for \$12, which arrived within mere minutes of us placing our order. Served in a banana leaf, the tamale was stuffed with a verde mole sauce, chicken and a respectable topping of cheese.

As someone who deeply appreciates a good verde sauce, I found the sauce in the tamale to be a bit bland. The chicken was cooked perfectly, and the juiciness of the poultry mixed well with the cheese. However, I found that it wasn’t enough to uplift the Tamale as a whole.

Thanks to the relaxed ambience and soft hums of cicadas, we fell back into our comfortable rhythm of three years of friendship as our

server arrived with our main dishes.

Somehow, without knowing us at all, I believe Conmole captured each of us and our friendship in the dishes. Each of the three distinct plates offered something new, combining to create a beautiful scene on our table.

Drew selected the Mole Amarillo con carne. Priced at \$30, the dish was a sizable portion of slow-cooked pork ribs accompanied by the titular mole amarillo sauce — which is a lighter style of mole made with tomatoes and an aroma of spices — and served with a side of rice.

Upon my first bites, the dish had a strong saltiness to it. While normally this would be overpowering, the taste of tomatoes in the mole provided a fresh, slight sweetness that paired together well. I personally found the dish to be a bit oily, but neither Drew nor Marty agreed.

Marty, the boldest of the bunch, picked the Pulpo — pan-seared octopus tentacle served beside a jicama and avocado salad with a spicy citrus dressing — for a total of \$28.

Personally, I do not love seafood, but I am always willing to try some-

thing new. The taste was definitely too fishy and briny for my palate, but Marty greatly appreciated its flavor. With the suckers on the tentacle, we expected the texture to feel bumpy and discordant, but it was perfectly smooth and cooked just right, not too dry or slimy.

As an indecisive person, the server helped me pick my dish, recommending the Mole Negro con carne. The Mole Negro con carne was \$30 and consisted of slow-cooked chicken swimming in Conmole’s homemade mole negro sauce — a traditional family recipe made of a blend of chilies, cacao, herbs and seeds. On the side, there was a bowl of rice.

With my first bite, I knew this dish would become one of my favorites in Charlottesville. The sauce was decadent and unique in flavor. It was a perfect balance of sweetness, spice and smokiness. The chicken was cooked excellently, falling off the bone easily. While the inclusion of cocoa may seem odd, not trying it would be a disservice to yourself.

As much as I loved many of the dishes we had that night, the best

part of Conmole was not the flavors, it was the service. Everyone we interacted with — whether it was the bartender, table busser or our server — was absolutely incredible. Even as the dinner crowd of families and date nights seeped into Conmole, we never felt rushed. We were able to sit back and enjoy each other’s company.

Properly full and ready to pay for our expensive but special meal, Drew, Marty and I continued our conversation as Selena Quintanilla’s angelic voice played softly from speakers. For a brief moment, our new fourth-year status and the growing uncertainty in our lives disappeared. All that really mattered was the food on our plates and the comfort it gave us.

Our dinner at Conmole — between the phenomenal service and delicious flavors — was a chance for old friends to catch up and take things slow before life forces things to speed up.

From soccer to startup, Emiliano Mercenari is doing it all

How the first-year Virginia men’s soccer player is balancing Division I athletics, academics and four tech startups

Abby Snowdon, Malone Morchower | Life Editor, Staff Writer

When Emiliano Mercenari arrived on Grounds a mere two months ago, he brought three very different identities with him — student, athlete and established entrepreneur.

At the University, these identities have converged. Mercenari is a first-year College student, an attacker and midfielder for the Virginia men’s soccer team and the founder and current operator of four startups — one of which he says currently sits at a \$2 million valuation.

Between high school and his arrival in Charlottesville, Mercenari spent a gap year playing with Inter Miami CF, where he captained the CF U20 team, continuing his development within the club’s system. During his time there, he trained alongside soccer icon Lionel Messi, and said he even earned the nickname “Mexican Messi” for his reputation as a prolific goal scorer and assister.

But the soccer field was not the only place Mercenari was making a name for himself.

Demonstrating a vivacious entrepreneurial spirit from a young age, Mercenari’s first business venture began when he was just 11 years old.

While he became completely enamored by a magician who visited his school, he noticed that his classmates seemed largely unimpressed. But where others saw a forgettable school performance, Mercenari saw a business opportunity.

“I was like, ‘Look, I think you’re a fantastic magician, but nobody gives a s—t about who you are,’” Mercenari said. “And so I told him, ‘Look, I’ll be your manager. I’ll get people to come watch you. I’ll post on social media for you, and I’ll grow your brand.’ And he paid me \$40 a week. It was my first paycheck.”

Although he did not know it at the time, that first paycheck would mark the beginning of a lifelong passion for entrepreneurship for Mercenari.

Last March, he founded Mercenari Works, an app development studio made to help influencers monetize their audiences. Rather than relying solely on brand deals, influencers can use Mercenari Works to build apps around their individual niches, generating revenue directly from their audiences through a subscription-based model. Mercenari has also used the studio as a launching pad for his own

ideas.

One of them is Buo, an AI-powered fitness platform tailored for college students that creates personalized meal plans and exercise regimens based on a user’s dining hall options, schedule, access to equipment and experience level. With Buo, Mercenari raised \$50,000 at a \$2 million valuation, garnered a waitlist of over 150 eager users and assembled a team of eight employees.

Aside from Buo, Mercenari has several other startups — Awaken, a faith-based alarm app, Betterself, a male-focused fitness app and Cohort, a networking app.

These four different companies, each with its own purpose, now compete for the same finite resource — Mercenari’s time. And his time is already divided between practices, games, classes, studying, socializing and the responsibilities that come with being a first-year undergraduate student.

While he acknowledges the difficulty that accompanies juggling his responsibilities, Mercenari said that he sees each pursuit as fueling the other.

“It’s hard to balance. Before this,

I was at Inter Miami, playing with Messi, the greatest soccer player of all time,” Mercenari said. “And then on top of that, running four companies with employees who depend on you for food and for money. It’s rough to keep that balance, but I feel like soccer has always kept me very disciplined. I feel like that’s taught me to be who I am today.”

For Mercenari, striking this balance is not just a professional pursuit. He said he makes a conscious effort to make time for the people in his life, recognizing that success means little if it comes at the expense of the relationships that matter most.

“Even if you were to work your a—off, if you lose [your relationships] in the process, it would be for nothing,” Mercenari said. “Try to find that balance and make time for the important people in your life because without them, you’re nothing.”

That emphasis on people is central to how Mercenari approaches his life. For all of his ideas, he knows he cannot bring them to life alone — an approach shaped by his first job as an 11-year-old manager. Mercenari may have been the one who saw the magi-

cian’s potential, but he realized that he needed someone to perform, an audience to watch and a team to make the operation work.

He said that his role as the owner and operator of multiple startups is not necessarily to know everything — it is to recognize what he does not know and find the people who do. With the help of several angel investors, as well as a talented team of individuals whose experience fills the gaps in his own, Mercenari has been able to turn his ideas into action.

He has carried that philosophy all the way from Miami to Charlottesville, where he hopes to build a similar network of people who can challenge his ideas, contribute their own expertise and help turn his many visions into reality.

“That’s also one of the reasons I picked UVa. — the people here are so intelligent,” Mercenari said. “And so I hope to find those people soon and network and continue growing my business with them. And I’m also looking forward to winning a national championship with the UVa. men’s soccer team.”

SPORTS

A summer in Vermont prepared four Cavaliers for season

Three captains and one starter spent the summer at the same USL2 team in Vermont

Michael Liebermann | Senior Associate

On March 17, the temperature in Burlington, Vt., bottomed out at 19 degrees. No one in the stands at Virtue Field, bundled up and still waving rainbow flags and green smoke canisters and a tifo of a dragon, seemed to care. Neither did the players.

At the final whistle of Vermont Green FC's 1-0 win over Portland Hearts of Pine, the players leaped onto the stands. Fourth-year Brendan Lambe, fourth-year Marco Dos Santos and fifth-year Sebastian Pop, Virginia's three captains, roared in their green jerseys.

Four days later, they were back wearing orange and blue for a spring game at Georgetown. But they were hooked.

"It was cool," Lambe said, smiling.

As the fall season crested the horizon the three players were focused on preparing for what they hoped could be a special season at Virginia. And they decided, along with third-year teammate Arnold Matshazi, that the best thing to do was spend the summer with Vermont Green.

"It's probably the best place to be in the summer," Pop said.

"Every position, every player there, is just higher quality," Matshazi said.

The Green, one of the USL2 clubs dotting the country that vacuums in college soccer's top talent every summer, were the reigning national champions.

"We have the best collection of college soccer players in the country in one place at one time," Vermont Green Coach Chris Taylor said. "And not only do we have what we believe is the best crowd and atmosphere in USL2, we have sold out every game for two years. There's waiting lists to get in."

The United Soccer Coaches preseason poll slotted Virginia at No. 11. Two weeks into the season, though, the Cavaliers were floundering, sitting at 2-1-3.

Luckily, there could be no better incubator for the team than putting its three captains and a starting forward together on the best summer team in the country.

They leveled up their relationships in Vermont. Going into the summer, Dos Santos, for example, was close with Pop — not as much with Lambe or Matshazi.

"Now I feel like we're best friends," Dos Santos said, "and I think that's to do with the summer. We literally spent every single second together."

The 'embodiment' of what a player is
Dos Santos played two previous

summers of USL2 soccer at Seacoast United. In 2024, he won a national title with the club in New Hampshire. But he holds another distinction at Seacoast.

Dos Santos scored the goal responsible for Vermont Green FC's last loss at home — on July 7, 2024.

At Seacoast, he derogatorily dubbed Vermont "Social Media FC." He was Public Enemy No. 1 in Burlington.

"When I joined [Vermont], I was kind of a cult hero," Dos Santos said. "Because I used to be the villain."

For two years, Adam Pfeifer and Chris Taylor, Vermont's sporting director and head coach, had been chasing Dos Santos. When Dos Santos's coach at Seacoast took another job, his tether to that club snapped, leaving an opportunity for Vermont. They wanted Dos Santos.

"He is a grinder, and he's going to do the dirty work. But he's also going to go past three people and stick it in the top corner," Taylor said. "He's literally the embodiment of what we try and tell players they need to be."

Dos Santos agreed to play in the U.S. Open Cup, America's version of the division-spanning FA Cup. Then Pfeifer and Taylor looked higher.

"You start to look at, 'Ok, if we can get Marco, who else can we get?'" Taylor said.

Lambe, Dos Santos and Pop all traveled up for the first Open Cup game in March, the win over Portland. Pop stayed behind for the second game, a loss on penalties, in April. But they returned in May for the start of the USL2 season, this time with Matshazi.

Vermont's first game of the season was a 2-0 win over Seacoast, and Matshazi scored. He ultimately scored four times in eight games. "He's not really involved in the game outside the scoring," Taylor said. "But he just pops up and he scores, and he's a finisher."

Pop, though, had to wait his turn. A challenge of a loaded summer team is how to allocate playing time, and Vermont addressed it by rotating players and limiting minutes. Pop never entered during the Open Cup and sat against Seacoast.

In the second game of the season, he started away against Boston Bolts. Early on, a bad giveaway in the mid-field left a Bolts forward, a speedy player from Wake Forest, charging forward in transition.

"He pushed the ball past Pop, and I was like, ah, s—, we're in trouble," Taylor said. "And next thing you know, Pop is running stride for stride



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with him, and makes this defensive play, and I was like, 'Whoa ... This guy's another level.'"

Vermont did not concede first in a game until midway through the season. When they did, in the final of the Steinbrecher Cup, the deficit lasted only a brief while. Dos Santos nipped in a whipped cross to tie it.

Vermont won 4-1.

Living as a 'celebrity'

Before games, when the players lined up for pregame introductions, the players would be down on the field, cackling. Lambe was "Lambe the lion." Pop was a "leader" in the back, Matshazi was "ruthless," Dos Santos, of course, had "come over from the dark side."

Were these summer league soccer games, or WWE fights? The public address announcer seemed confused.

But it fit with the community.

Three thousand people packed into the stadium for every home game, and some traveled to away games. Dos Santos said the experience gave him a taste of "professional life."

"From the beginning, ... the turnouts to all the home games were actually quite insane," Matshazi said. "When you're in front of the fans and they're announcing your name, that's when you're like, 'Oh wow, there's a lot of people here.'"

Every morning, Dos Santos would get a free coffee from a local shop,

and when he went, he would talk to the owner. He met the whole family in the end. That's not to mention the Instagram direct messages — from random people — wishing them well and suggesting they check out a local store.

"They'll joke, oh, not much to do in Vermont, so we'll go to the games," Lambe said. "But it's not just a pastime — they really love it. It's something I've never experienced at USL2 ... You're kind of a little celebrity in Burlington."

The four players were with the team for the first nine games of the 16-game regular season. Vermont won every game they played.

The bookend to their time with the team, Taylor said, was when they traveled to see Dos Santos's family. They stayed for a weekend and met everyone — parents, uncles.

When they left, Dos Santos's parents gave their son a message for his teammates.

"Any time those guys want to come, they can. It's an open-door policy."

A rocky start in Charlottesville

As the USL2 playoffs approached in mid-July, Vermont still stood undefeated. But Lambe, Dos Santos, Matshazi and Pop were back in Charlottesville, re-acclimating before the preseason.

This had been the bargain all along, and all parties were okay with

it. The Virginia guys watched the broadcast from Charlottesville as Vermont beat the Flint City Bucks for another national title. Part of them wanted to be there hoisting the trophy. Vermont Green had offered to pay for flights back for the playoff run, at least for Dos Santos.

"I was like, 'Hey, it just doesn't make sense for me,'" Dos Santos said. "I need to focus on the UVA. team and the group."

The season is six games old now. It is not off to a fiery start for Virginia. The Cavaliers, who entered the preseason ranked No. 11, opened with losses to UCLA and No. 16 High Point. They then trounced American 4-0. Then they lost again, this time to Florida Gulf Coast.

Virginia settled itself with a 2-0 win Friday over Boston College and then a 1-1 draw Tuesday with Oregon State. But ask Dos Santos, and Vermont Green FC prepared him for the early adversity. Virginia, he said, struggled in the spring, winning only one game. But Dos Santos went to Vermont, and he was heartened.

"I was playing with guys [at Vermont] that are all on the Mac Hermann watch list," Dos Santos said. "And I'm looking at our team [at Virginia] and I'm like, 'We're pretty f—ing good.'"

Johnson and Mallory step back into the spotlight

As the 2026-27 season approaches, the Charlottesville natives could be central to what comes next for the Cavaliers

Jordan Zimm | Staff Writer

Virginia basketball is set to enter the 2026-27 season with plenty of new faces. The women's basketball team has a new head coach in Aaron Roussell and a completely different roster than the one that accomplished a Cinderella NCAA Tournament run for the ages. On the men's side, Coach Ryan Odom is looking to follow up and improve on a debut 30-win season while filling in the holes of numerous senior departures.

Amid an offseason defined by change, two guards familiar not only with their teams, but also with the city of Charlottesville, could define the next chapter for both programs.

Fourth-year guard Kymora Johnson and second-year guard Chance Mallory enter the season at different stages of their collegiate careers. Johnson has already established herself as one of the best Cavalier guards ever, entering her senior season ranked No. 9 in career points and No. 4 in assists while holding the program record for three-pointers. Mallory has only scratched the surface of his potential. After an impressive freshman campaign playing 24 minutes per game off the bench, he appears poised to take another step forward — as Virginia's starting point guard.

The two guards' roles differ, but their paths to those roles are intertwined.

Johnson and Mallory have known each other since they were about five years old, when opportunities for girls' basketball leagues were limited, and Johnson played in a local boys' league.

"Yeah, I met Chance when I was probably five years old," Johnson said. "There [were not] a lot of teams here in Charlottesville for girls, so I had to end up playing with the guys. And there was Bob the Bruins, which is like a local league here, and we both made the travel team, and we were on that, and he was like the smallest guy on the court, of course."

Their connection only strengthened from that point. Johnson later joined an Amateur Athletic Union team coached by Mallory's father, Joe, and the two developed side by side, maturing into leaders and eventually attending high school at St. Anne's-Belfield.

And now, years later, they will begin their second and fourth seasons playing home games in the same stadium.

For Johnson, that responsibility is nothing new. She has been the Cavaliers' leading scorer in each of her first three years. But her indi-

vidual play and performance have always been a means to achieve a larger goal.

"I didn't want to go somewhere where I was gonna sit [on] the bench or not play," Johnson said. "And I didn't want to really go somewhere that already had a legacy built, because I wanted to leave one behind."

Her last chance to leave that legacy will come under circumstances few could have predicted. Former Coach Amaka Agugua-Hamilton unexpectedly departed Virginia after the season, prompting Johnson to enter the transfer portal April 6. The next day, Roussell stepped in for Agugua-Hamilton, and 11 days after the new head coach was hired, Johnson withdrew her name from the transfer portal.

Like Johnson, Mallory has also had reason to reconsider whether Virginia was the right place for him. After Tony Bennett's shocking retirement in October 2024, Mallory decommitted from Virginia and reconsidered whether staying home for the next level was still the right choice. Ultimately, quality family time and conversations with Athletic Director Carla Williams brought him back home.

"I'm really close with my family, with my sister, my Nana, so I feel like family is very important to me," Mallory said. "And loyalty is also one big thing, and I had a lot of meetings with Carla, and she made it clear that she wanted me to be here as well."

Mallory's loyalty has now positioned him for a much bigger part to play for a preseason top-15 team, according to ESPN. After spending his first-year season learning behind veteran guards Dallin Hall and Malik Thomas, Mallory enters his sophomore campaign with an opportunity to take control of and run the offense. With a home crowd on his back, his performance bears an additional element of pressure.

As he remembers sitting in the nosebleeds of John Paul Jones Arena with his father, watching Bennett's pack-line defense and the development of one of the premier programs in the country, Mallory recognizes that the children in those same seats are watching him and looking up to him as a role model.

"It means everything [to] me," Mallory said. "It's an honor and a blessing that I can be able to put on the uniform and walk out in front of all these fans and be able to play for the little kids ... I was a little kid out there in the nosebleeds watching these guys and looking up to them. So having that responsibility to be able to do my best and play for not



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just myself, but for everybody else that's coming to the games, and for the whole city, it means a lot, and it's a blessing."

Few people can relate to this feeling, but his longtime acquaintance, Johnson, is one of the only people in the world who understands it.

"A lot of the same people that supported me when I was growing up are the ones that are in the stands now," Johnson said.

After three seasons of trying to return the Cavaliers' women's basketball team to the ACC promised land, Johnson finally began to see that vision materialize last March. Virginia won three NCAA Tournament games as a First Four team, becoming the first team in tournament history to accomplish such a feat. It was also the first time the Cavaliers reached the Sweet 16 since 2000. Johnson was at the center of the historic run, averaging 22.8 points per game across Virginia's four NCAA Tournament contests.

However, Johnson enters her last-ride senior season with uncertainty. She will be one of the few constants in a program trying to build on its NCAA Tournament success under a new coach and a new culture.

"I came here to win and to put this place back on the map, not to receive handouts," Johnson said.

Even though Johnson has one season left to prove to trust the process, for Mallory, the process is just beginning. Yet their goals are incredibly similar.

"I mean, we had offers from

everywhere in the country, and then we decided to take our talent here and play for the city we grew up in," Mallory said. "So that just shows ... how beautiful Charlottesville is and how great the city is and the people that are around it. We want to stay and show out for everybody [who] helped us through our journey."

Virginia basketball will look different, but it will center around two of Charlottesville's finest. Johnson will try to guide an almost com-

pletely new roster while cementing the legacy she has talked about imprinting on the program and the University. Mallory will attempt to establish himself as one of the early faces of Odom's program.

But years after they were just two kids growing up on the same Charlottesville travel team, Johnson and Mallory now have an opportunity to help guide the teams they grew up watching to places they have never been before.

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Why — and why not — to overreact after a Week Zero win

Virginia dominated NC State. But how much can be drawn from one game?

Drew Dillman | Staff Writer

Early and often, the Cavaliers punished NC State in their 34-8 victory Aug. 29.

The dominant victory and the subsequent week off for No. 25 Virginia football lends itself to narratives of a high-ceiling season in the media, which have since been emboldened by a No. 25 ranking — but at this point in the season, the narrative is based on a sample size of one.

Following the win, though, reactions to Virginia's pummeling of the Wolfpack resounded, with Virginia being labeled a “dark horse College Football Playoff team” by some in the wake of the victory.

While there is some evidence to believe the hype may be warranted, there are also reasons to cool one's jets in favor of a more measured response.

Why to buy Virginia stock now

Fifth-year Beau Pribula performed admirably in Week Zero, throwing 9-for-11 with 155 passing yards. His abilities on the ground shone, as he racked up 110 yards on 15 attempts. Pribula was named ACC Quarterback of the Week for his performance.

In addition to Pribula, three other Cavaliers earned ACC Player of the Week nods — seventh-year tackle Monroe Mills, fourth-year safety Brandyn Hillman and fifth-year kicker Will Bettridge.

What is notable about these names, aside from their success in the one game played thus far, is that they all have experience — a trait that is especially visible on the offensive line. The most junior of that quintet of starters is fifth-year left tackle McKale Boley. In general, though, this team is experienced — Virginia ranks above every other team by total snaps and game starts.

Virginia dominated on the ground. Besides Pribula, five other Cavaliers recorded rushing yards, all in double-digit amounts. Fourth-year running back Jekail Middlebrook, in his debut for Virginia, led the running backs with 64 yards. Four other Cavaliers combined for 84 yards.

This running back room-by-committee served the Cavaliers well in the first game, and it is reasonable to suspect such success could continue over the remainder of the season.

The culture surrounding the

program also should be recognized. Despite success in 2025, Virginia did not lose offensive coordinator and tight ends coach Des Kitchens or defensive coordinator John Rudzinski during the offseason, and Coach Tony Elliott signed an extension to remain in Charlottesville through the end of the decade — a sign of belief in him from the athletics administration.

Elliott's motto for 2026 is deceptively simple, but gets across the goals of a program seemingly on the rise.

“A, B, C, one, two, three,” Elliott said.

The letters stand for “attitude, belief, and connection,” while the numbers denote the fact that 2026 provides the opportunity for a third conference championship for the Cavaliers, following titles in 1989 and 1995.

But beyond a series of letters and numbers, Elliott has produced results — even if he only has one winning season and a single victory in 2026 so far to show for it.

Why to not be so “Cavalier” just yet

As previously mentioned, this Virginia team is experienced — but

what goes hand-in-hand with that is age and injuries. That notably old offensive line? Men at those positions are some of the most injured in the game. That rushing attack? Also high on the list for injury risk.

Nearly all of the starting offensive line have missed a few games for injury at various points, with ironman sixth-year offensive lineman Noah Josey as a notable exception. Seventh-year offensive lineman Drake Metcalf and Mills have both missed entire seasons for injury reasons.

Furthermore, while Pribula's antics on the ground thrilled the crowd in Week Zero, that same disposition to run might be putting him at more risk.

The Virginia win Aug. 29 is the only data point to work with at present, and NC State may not be as good of an opponent as seemed prior to kickoff. Yahoo Sports, in their preseason ACC power rankings, placed NC State ninth — firmly in the middle of the conference. Following their performance at Scott Stadium, the Wolfpack were moved down to No. 13 in the conference.

The vaunted Virginia rushing offense is another aspect fans can

be satisfied with. Beyond the previously mentioned-injury risk, it is worthwhile to mention the possibility that it may be less useful when playing down — when the Cavaliers may need to stop the clock rather than chew through it.

Pribula attempted only three passes in the first half against NC State. This run-first attitude allowed the Cavaliers to control the pace of play, and notably every Virginia possession in the first half was longer than the Wolfpack possession that preceded it.

While this ground-based plan of attack was a recipe for success against NC State, it may not be so useful when Virginia finds itself down at some point later in the season. Pribula has proved himself an efficient passer in this game, but it remains to be seen how he will operate in the Virginia offense in a more high-pressure situation.

Elliott has a mountain ahead of him, beginning Friday with Norfolk State. He and the team have the opportunity to prove themselves and to push aside the predictions with performance on the field.

THE CAVALIER DAILY

THE CAVALIER DAILY

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Answers are available on the digital version of this puzzle which is published at www.cavalierdaily.com.

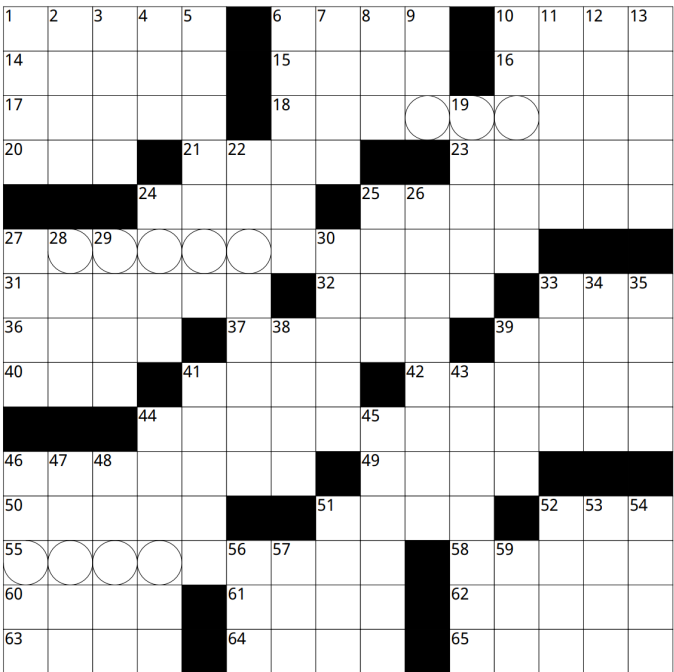
ACROSS

- 1 Scheming group
- 6 Blue-green hue
- 10 On top of
- 14 Without others
- 15 Director Guillermo del ____
- 16 Not a hop, skip or jump
- 17 Kinda
- 18 "Get out of here!"
- 20 Type of shirt
- 21 Photo sharing app
- 23 Pretend
- 24 Facebook parent?
- 25 Supporters of the arts
- 27 Target for many McIntire students
- 31 Tenant
- 32 Reverberate
- 33 Two peas could be in one
- 36 "Abundance" author Klein
- 37 Much obliged, in Munich
- 39 Strauss of jeans fame
- 40 Option for a dropout
- 41 Temporary trends
- 42 Not a keeper

- 44 Paternal caregiver ... or a clue to the circled letters
 - 46 Like many dinnertime UVA events
 - 49 "My bad!"
 - 50 Opera solos
 - 51 Farm structure
 - 52 Gesture that might be confused with sneezing
 - 55 Molded food?
 - 58 Virus whose name derives from an African river
 - 60 Pollute
 - 61 Quick
 - 62 Plastic wrap brand
 - 63 Comic ____
 - 64 Chooses
 - 65 Smelled bad
- DOWN
- 1 Signature collector?
 - 2 Sunburn antidote
 - 3 Make disinterested
 - 4 What follows fire, carpenter or soldier

- 5 "I want to be alone!"
- 6 MRI alternative
- 7 Lennon partner Ono
- 8 "To be" conjugation
- 9 Shake alternative
- 10 Trees in the birch family
- 11 "One thing ____ another..."
- 12 Barbershop alternative
- 13 Unwraps
- 19 Even if, for short
- 22 Temporal word in Captain Kirk's logs
- 24 Ecstasy, formally
- 25 Prepare for a trip
- 26 Misses deeply
- 27 Heffley of "Diary of a Wimpy Kid"
- 28 Seep (out)
- 29 "____ of the Flies"
- 30 It can follow common or sixth
- 33 Machu Picchu's locale
- 34 Not under
- 35 Urgent, as a situation
- 38 Adderall target (abbr.)

- 39 Falls (behind)
- 41 Language for Hormuz negotiations
- 43 Trendy quality
- 44 Thanksgiving meals
- 45 Christmas meals
- 46 Superhero garments
- 47 Smell
- 48 Easy two-pointer
- 51 Email sign-off
- 52 Cartoon explorer
- 53 Turing of cryptology fame
- 54 Credit union alternative
- 56 Money manager (abbr.)
- 57 Swimmer's unit
- 59 Upside-down sleeper



CARTOON

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Melody Moore | Cartoonist



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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Professor Emily Ogden's book immortalizes Edgar Allan Poe

Through the lens of authors he greatly moved, Ogden's book examines how Poe's work lingers in the mind of his readers

Carter Horner | Senior Writer

English Prof. and author Emily Ogden's upcoming book, "Darkness Becomes Bright: On the Brief Life and Immortal Art of Edgar Allan Poe," offers an unparalleled window into Edgar Allan Poe's life, chronicling his growth into one of literature's most lauded figures, his one-of-a-kind storytelling and his visceral effect on readers.

Poe famously attended the University as part of only its second class in 1826, though he had only been enrolled for less than a year. His brief stint on Grounds is a testament to the University's literary prowess, and has since been immortalized with his preserved former room.

In addition to teaching poetry at the University, Ogden researches literature, and her Sept. 29 release will dive into Poe's history — examining exactly how he changed lives with his writing. Ogden began her research for "Darkness Becomes Bright" in 2021, and a year later began the three-year writing process, concluding her work in the summer of 2025.

From thematic throughlines to direct references to psychoanalysis, "Darkness Becomes Bright" is anchored by a focus on three key figures. In her research, Ogden encountered both analytical and biographical works from Poe-inspired authors who described their relationship with Poe's work. Ogden's research was supported by a \$40,000 grant from the Whiting Foundation, which rewards "deeply researched and imaginatively composed nonfiction."

"We have a surprising amount of information about first readings of Poe, what it felt like to run into him, often as a child," Ogden said. "Two of the three figures who I focus on in addition to him encountered Poe as a child and read him, and then went on as adults to write about him."

One such writer that Ogden features heavily in her book is Julio Cortázar, an Argentine-French short story writer born in 1914, 65 years after Poe's death. An ode that Cortázar wrote during his childhood borrows the rhyme-scheme from one of Poe's most famous poems, "The Raven," taking the theme of loss present in the original poem and flipping it to express his belief that Poe will never be forgotten. Cortázar was later hired by UNESCO as a freelance translator in the 1950s, and translated Poe's writing into Spanish. His versions are



COURTESY EMILY OGDEN

CAPTION GOES HERE CAPTION GOES HERE CAPTION GOES HERE CAPTION GOES HERE CAPTION GOES HERE CAPTION GOES HERE CAPTION GOES HERE CAPTION GOES HERE

widely considered to be the finest and most poetic translations of Poe's stories.

"I found that at Princeton's library, they preserved a notebook that Cortázar wrote when he was 12 years old ... The last poem is an ode to Edgar Allan Poe," Ogden said. "When he's an adult, he goes on to write this incredible translation of all of Poe's stories after he'd already done his own writing."

Another author Ogden features is the former French Princess Marie Bonaparte — a descendant of Napoleon and a patient of Neurologist Sigmund Freud in the 1920s — who, according to Ogden, found Poe so disturbing as a child that she avoided his work until her 40s. While working on psychoanalysis with Freud, Bonaparte began to read Poe once again, aiming to deliberately scare herself. Ogden said Poe had such a significant impact on Bonaparte's psyche that his stories still terrified her decades after reading them.

Bonaparte eventually authored her own psychoanalytical biography of Poe in 1933. According to Ogden, "Darkness Becomes Bright" compiles accounts from Bonaparte's

journals to an extent that has never been seen before, delving into Bonaparte's work with Freud and their use of Poe in exploring her personal fears.

The third major literary figure deeply researched in Ogden's work is French poet Charles Baudelaire, who spent 14 years translating Poe's work into French, popularizing it across Europe in the 1850s.

Through analyzing Poe's resonance with writers across distinct timeframes and specializations, Ogden's work proves how universal many of Poe's common themes can be.

"The story of the book is the story of why horror helps people to live with things in their lives that they find difficult to face, and what allowed Poe in his own life to be able to write the things that he wrote and what they meant to people," Ogden said.

Ogden's initial passion for "Darkness Becomes Bright," however, was not based on secondary sources, but a personal fascination with Poe's character portrayals, including those of individuals who would traditionally be seen as villains. "The Tell-Tale Heart" is one

of Poe's works highlighted in the book, which presents the first-person perspective of a killer in an effort to humanize the character in an unsettling, often misunderstood way.

"In talking to people about Poe, I would encounter people who really wanted to push him away and wanted to say, 'Okay, this is just a dream somebody had. This is a madman. This is a drunk,'" Ogden said. "And I really wanted to figure out how to articulate why I don't think that's the right thing to do."

Ogden said her research revealed a strong sense of loyalty in Poe's readers, which then became a central theme of her book. To do justice to Poe's story and impact, Ogden said her work had to include the stories of famed authors who had been moved enough by Poe's work to continue to engage with him throughout their own careers.

"He grabs people and doesn't let them go, and means different things sometimes at different points in their lives ... Something about him really inspires loyalty," Ogden said.

Her choice to focus her re-

search on Poe was not only personal but also practical — Ogden said Poe's popularity lent itself to her analysis given she could assume audiences had some established familiarity with his work. Still, Ogden said her work looks to connect with readers with ranging knowledge of Poe. Whether they are scholars of the author or simply curious about him with little to no knowledge of his work, Ogden is confident that there will be new takeaways for readers to find and appreciate in the book.

"I really am interested in reaching the Poe-curious, and even people who don't think that they like Poe because he can be a little bit much," Ogden said. "It's also a book for people who just like to think about why literature matters to us or want to encounter stories of what reading can mean to people."

Representing a culmination of five years of Ogden's authorial journey, "Darkness Becomes Bright" releases digitally and physically Sept. 29.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

‘Teeny Tiny Trifecta 9’ is a small taste of Charlottesville’s art

The exhibition provides an insight into Charlottesville’s vibrant contemporary art scene

Siddharth Sharma | Staff Writer

As fall settles on the University, outside observers might be deceived by the outwardly subtle, quiet nature of Charlottesville. The Second Street Gallery’s ongoing exhibit, “Teeny Tiny Trifecta 9,” challenges that notion by showcasing the wealth of creativity prominent in the local art scene. Featuring 609 artworks by 203 artists primarily based in Charlottesville and Central Virginia, the local contemporary art nonprofit’s exhibition offers an introduction to the diversity of thought and experience to be found in the City.

The exhibition, on display from Sept. 4 to Sept. 25, is now in its ninth annual iteration — introduced in 2017 by Kristen Chiacchia, Second Street Gallery’s chief curator. Chiacchia said she wanted to find a way to raise funds as a nonprofit without relying on the practice of auctioning expensive art every three years.

“I felt that auctions only included a certain demographic of people. Only so many people could be in the room and be able to afford to purchase the work,” Chiacchia said. “I was like, ‘What could I do to not only include more artists in this fundraiser exhibi-

tion, but also make work accessible to a much larger group of people?’”

Chiacchia’s solution was simple and twofold. First, instead of pricing out all but the most seasoned collectors, every single piece at “Teeny Tina Trifecta” is up for sale at exactly \$125. This affordability opens the hobby of purchasing gallery art — perhaps traditionally steered toward the wealthy — to a broader audience, even including college students.

Secondly, the exhibition’s “Trifecta” and sizing requirements lend an opportunity to a wider variety of local artists. The gallery requires artists to each submit three pieces of art, with the notable twist being that each of the trio must be exactly eight by eight inches in dimension. The works are then ordered in a sequential manner that organizes each artist’s work in its set of three. From afar, each wall at the gallery resembles a mosaic of evenly placed columns with matching color palettes. Yet, far from imposing a sense of uniformity, the precision of the presentation makes the variety of artistic styles all the more noticeable.

Furthermore, the thematic elements of the show lend themselves to a

dialogue between the work of different artists. Natural themes are especially prevalent in exhibiting artists’ minds, with pieces ranging from clay sculptures of birds to a three-dimensional recreation of a sea floor. Throughout the exhibit, these similarities create pockets of association among the submissions of artists that otherwise have little in common stylistically.

A striking example is a set of three paintings of a white bird on a black background positioned close to another set of more surreal paintings of birds, as if to inspire a conversation on the different expressions drawn from a common inspiration. This exhibition’s earthy subjects lend it a calmer undertone that belies its connection with Charlottesville.

More than artists and onlookers simply sharing creative themes however, Chiacchia noted that the exhibition generates a certain communal excitement given the scale and interactivity of the showcase.

“I think part of it is just all the interactions with the artists,” Chiacchia said. “The First Friday opening last year we had over 700 people come.”

The communal energy of the exhibi-

tion was not felt by Chiacchia alone. Artist Liam Cavanaugh, a first time participant in “Teeny Tiny Trifecta,” noted the artistic connections the event helped foster.

“I think the importance here, at least for artists, is not only to learn about other artists who may be local, who are working in a way that the curator of the exhibition feels is similar enough to group them together, but also just community,” Cavanaugh said.

Anyone is able to submit work for consideration, meaning for many artists it is a first taste of a formal exhibition or a path to further opportunities. Notably, one participant is chosen to conduct a solo show at Second Street Gallery every year. Beyond its impact on creating new relationships for artists, Chiacchia also opined that the lower stakes involved helps artists experiment and develop their style with the challenge of putting their expression within the dimensional constraints.

The assortment of styles and unique approaches to utilizing space found in the exhibition are proof of that exploration. A set of three clay-fired birds hung in circular frames sit-

ting just a few meters away from three portraits of Charlottesville landmarks made of Lego pieces is just one example of this eclectic nature of the show.

Having been a part of the local art scene for nine years now, the exhibition’s growth from just 72 artists in its first edition to 203 now is a testament to the creativity bubbling beneath the surface in Charlottesville. According to Chiacchia, “Teeny Tiny Trifecta” has become a momentous event for Second Street Gallery each year, playing a role in financially supporting further artistic programming.

“This is our biggest show. It’s the show with the biggest budget throughout the year,” Chiacchia said. “Some artists donate either part of their commission or the full commission to the gallery, and it really helps jumpstart our season so that we raise a bunch of money from this show and then we’re able to do the other shows for the rest of the year.”

As creatives across disciplines grapple with the persisting challenge of gaining recognition and sharing a message, “Teeny Tiny Trifecta” stands as a beacon, and potential launchpad, for artists hidden in Charlottesville.

Fridays After Five strikes a chord in Charlottesville

The free weekly concert series created a space for Charlottesville residents to connect throughout the summer

Victor-Jenay Cortijo Lopez | Staff Writer

During the ceaseless season of oppressive heat over the summer, some may have expected downtown Charlottesville to transform from a college town to a ghost town. But every Friday at 5:30 p.m., music filled the Downtown Mall as Ting Pavilion came alive, bringing the city together for Fridays After Five, the free concert series that is synonymous with Charlottesville’s summer weekends. The usually quieter summer evenings were replaced by crowds gathering around the pavilion, filling the area with conversation, activity and music.

First kicking off in 1988, Fridays After Five has consistently given Charlottesville residents the opportunity to hear local artists perform a wide variety of genres. Since April, residents have heard country, reggae, folk, rock and jazz artists perform weekly. Beyond the music, a variety of local food and drink vendors lined the area around the pavilion, giving attendees the opportunity to grab something to eat or drink while listening to the performances.

During the Aug. 28 set — at which Dreamsicle the Band played

— that intergenerational community was particularly visible. As the band played its final song, people rushed from their seats to form a conga line, stretching across the crowd and bringing people of different ages together through music. What began as a small group quickly became part of the larger crowd, with attendees leaving their seats to join the celebration.

With thousands of people moving between vendors, tables and picnic blankets or in front of the stage, the pavilion felt continuously lively throughout the night. Portions of the vendors’ proceeds went towards a rotating variety of local nonprofits, allowing the businesses to contribute to the Charlottesville community while serving attendees throughout the summer.

One of the most special parts of Fridays After Five cannot be measured numerically, but rather seen physically through the act of people coming together. Each week, Charlottesville residents found time to gather, relax and enjoy one another’s company through music and community. Paul Cendron, a local videographer for Nite4Nite Productions who

documented Fridays After Five this summer, described the deeply human moments he captured each Friday.

“Things that I capture are usually happy people, smiling faces ... businesses being shown ... food, the band, artistic moments, things natural that I can find,” Cendron said.

Throughout the 2026 series, local musicians such as multi-instrumental soul group Joslyn & The Sweet Compression, hard rock band The Longway and indie band The Golden Hours gave residents a taste of their nearby music scene. This inclusion of local bands grounded the event in the Charlottesville music community, allowing the music and support for musicians to take center stage rather than simply serving as a backdrop for a Friday evening.

Later in the summer, as University students returned to Grounds, the Friday gatherings also helped bridge the Charlottesville and University communities. On Aug. 28, the concert series coincided with the annual Paint the Town Orange event, where the University Marching Band and Spirit Squad traveled to the Downtown Mall to bring a taste of Univer-

sity spirit to the Charlottesville community in conjunction with Fridays After Five.

Capping off a night of musical performances with a pep rally in support of the Virginia football team, that night’s performance at the pavilion created a sea of orange where people of all ages celebrated both the University and Charlottesville. The crowd gathered for Paint the Town Orange reflected the multitude of residents the series had brought together across the Charlottesville community during the summer.

Alka Link, fourth-year Data Science student and University cheerleader, was among the cheer team members who staffed a University tent at the event and handed out posters promoting the upcoming Virginia football season. She also performed with the team during the Paint the Town Orange pep rally. Link said Fridays After Five provided an opportunity for Charlottesville residents to feel connected to the University community.

“It’s a really great way to get the Charlottesville community involved. It’s really cool to see all of them come

together. Seeing the different restaurants, shops, putting [on] orange and UVa. gear is really exciting,” Link said.

Savannah Edwards, local theater and film artist and Class of 2020 alumna, gave a snapshot of the communal experience created by Paint the Town Orange and Fridays After Five.

“Everyone’s having a great time,” Edwards said. “Community is being built. People are probably dancing down there by the band, enjoying live music, and it’s totally free. It’s such an asset to the community, and I think this really benefits the economy down here.”

As the school year begins and summer’s final moments wane, Fridays After Five will come to a close Sept. 11. For months, the weekly concerts gave Charlottesville residents a place to dance, eat, listen to music and spend time together. The concerts demonstrated that a concert series could be not only a performance, but a gathering place for families, friends, students, longtime residents and newcomers alike.

OPINION

LEAD EDITORIAL

EDITORIAL: USPS cannot ignore the Constitution for elections

The Postal Service continued to develop a catastrophic ballot verification system ahead of the midterms, ignoring court orders and risking the disenfranchisement of voters

There is a particular kind of contempt for democracy that does not bother to contest a court order and instead tries to evade it altogether. The United States Postal Service has proven they hold that contempt. Two months ahead of the midterms, a whistleblower has come forward to expose efforts to secretly continue the development of a ballot-verification program that could block hundreds of thousands of ballots from being sent out. The stakes are not abstract — in Virginia alone, more than 259,000 absentee ballots were returned by mail in the last midterm election. The whistleblower report exposes a federal agency, empowered by President Trump, unafraid to attack democracy and judicial oversight.

The blueprint for disenfranchisement began in the Oval Office. In March, President Trump issued Executive Order 14399, directing the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and the commissioner of the Social Security Administration to compile citizenship lists to determine who was eligible to receive

a ballot. This change demonstrates a mass modern-day disenfranchisement movement that decides who has the opportunity to vote by mail. Over the following five months, a legal fight ensued in the face of the election restrictions, ping-ponging back and forth. As the whistleblower describes, USPS continued developing the Portal in preparation to launch the system before the midterms, directly contradicting federal injunctions. The development currently stands blocked by an Aug. 27 restraining order.

Physically, the haste, inconsistency and secrecy with which the Portal was built is a threat to hundreds of thousands of votes in the midterm elections. The Portal violated countless principles of error and debug testing — evaluations that seem imperative for a program impacting the suffrage of American citizens. If the Portal is unable to verify every voter in a state's vote batch against its database, USPS would reject every other vote in that batch. A batch of 50,000 votes would have 49,999 verifiable votes rejected due to a single,

possibly accidental, error. That number is deeply alarming, considering that in 2021, former Gov. Glenn Youngkin defeated Terrence McAuliffe by roughly 63,000 votes. One glitch, replicated across countless batches, would cost elections.

The more fundamental concern lies with the constitutional basis of the initiative itself. Efforts to strengthen voter verification by President Trump serve a legitimate government and public interest. However, the way the Trump administration has pursued that objective raises broader concerns about election administration and federal authority. Article I Section 4 of the Constitution explicitly assigns state legislatures primary responsibility for determining the voting details of congressional elections. Also detailed in that clause is the definite power of Congress to override, make or alter those rules at any time. In no way does the Constitution confer upon the executive branch an authority to rewrite state election and verification rules. This executive action is not only a direct indict-

ment of the Constitution, but also a reflection of the current administration's thoughts on democracy as a whole.

Together, the physical and legal issues regarding the Portal's creation implicate principles far broader than the verification system itself. Mass disenfranchisement, federal interference in election administration and regulation and the erosion of constitutionally protected political participation should concern all citizens. The most concerning, tangible danger lies in the precedent set by the Portal's use — a naturalized citizen, a newly married woman, a confused first-time voter, all rejected because of an error-ridden computer program. Will they vote during the next election? Will they succumb to having their votes swallowed by the Portal and never counted?

These concerns are not abstract. College students will feel the impact of changes to mail-in ballots, a system that many rely on while living away from their permanent home addresses. Moreover, there are myriad reasons why individuals use

mail-in ballots — from accessibility concerns to the needs of active-duty soldiers. In preparation for that reality, it is important now more than ever to pay attention to changes in election rules and registration requirements and to have a clear plan for casting ballots.

USPS's job is to deliver the mail — not to decide who gets to receive it. The President's job is to faithfully execute the law — not destroy democracy. Mail-in voting is not a loophole to be closed entirely, but a lifeline of political participation for millions of American citizens. Voter confusion is a form of voter manipulation. And the American public will not sit silent and let a president who uses mail-in ballots quietly decide who else gets to use them.

THE CAVALIER DAILY EDITORIAL BOARD is composed of the Executive Editor, the Editor-in-Chief, the two Opinion Editors, two Senior Associates and an Opinion Columnist. The board can be reached at eb@cavalierdaily.com.

GARVIE: Fighting the sustainability fight requires an army

University students have done an outstanding job of implementing sustainability practices — now, we need to implement these practices county-wide and statewide

Earth Overshoot Day has been creeping up the calendar since the 1970s. In 2026, that day was July 30, meaning that just halfway through the year, resource consumption exceeded what the Earth is capable of producing in a year. Despite generations upon generations contributing to the current climate state, it seems to be solely up to the youngest generations to fix the messes of society's past. Luckily, this group — and students at the University — has proven more than willing to take up the fight. However, it takes more than one slice of the population to make a difference in this issue.

In July, the University's Office for Sustainability announced the winners of their 2026 Sustainable Leaders award. These winners have been hosting countless volunteer events and joining in on sustainability practices in their day-to-day lives. The University also has students volunteering for Morven Kitchen Garden, which provides food for UVa. Dine, local residents and food insecurity programs. These types of students exemplify what it means to be a leader for sustainable practice, and Grounds certainly feels the impact. The University had a

44.5 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, a 27 percent decrease in water usage and 32 percent waste reduction in the past 15 years. If all of Virginia followed, our University could be setting the precedent for how society should interact with its environment.

In order for these students' sustainability actions to reach a broader sphere, green practices need to

more people involved in making an impact, the larger that impact will be. There are a variety of ways in which students can advocate for environmental justice outside of Grounds. For one, students can become more involved with governmental advocacy. Talking to a local representative will not always result in a policy change, but any press is good press, even if it is just spread-

people is to share everyday opportunities that create small yet impactful changes. UVa. Sustainability offers corner cleanups every two weeks — an event that is relatively simple to organize and is easily replicable. The more University students advertise these types of events, the more potential there is for increased community representation. In addition to hosting events that are open to

significant size — it is equally important to provide tangible, attainable goals for individuals to work towards. Seemingly small, everyday actions make this immense global problem digestible and solvable.

Reading about the daily tragedies caused by climate change can lead to inaction because of the overwhelming scale of the problem. Finding others who are just as passionate helps make the problem more manageable. Environmental clubs and volunteer groups are plentiful at the University and around Charlottesville, but oftentimes, what can hold people back from greater involvement is simply a lack of knowledge on sustainable approaches in everyday life. Getting students and citizens to speak up, especially to local governments, about the world they care about makes more of a difference than any one club — but the University is still off to a great start.

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“Common sense dictates that the more people involved in making an impact, the larger that impact will be.”

be encouraged and attainable, both of which can be achieved with increased advocacy. Indeed, University students have done a spectacular job of helping our environment, but some issues require broader involvement. Students should bring these issues to the next level by platforming them before the public through advocacy before local governments, allowing all generations in a community to coalesce and fight climate change.

Common sense dictates that the

ing the word by having a public conversation with our politicians. Charlottesville City Council holds a public speaking session known as “Community Matters,” where individuals present issues or ideas at a City Council meeting — this provides the perfect opportunity to lobby for sustainable efforts in the community.

Governmental advocacy is not the only way to involve more people in implementing sustainable practices. The best way to engage more

all, students and clubs can strive to spread sustainability information and tips as much as possible.

We have already seen the Office for Sustainability showing off University students' efforts, providing opportunities for events like Student Garden Workdays and volunteering at Green Games, along with integrating sustainability practices like recycling, composting and litter cleanups around Grounds. When dealing with issues on such a large scale — and the Earth is a pretty

HASNAIN: Virginia must be for all lovers

Virginians should vote in favor of Question 2 on the constitutional amendments this November, amending the state constitution to do away with the same-sex marriage ban

According to various bumper stickers, t-shirts and other state gift-shop paraphernalia, Virginia is for lovers — yet the state constitution begs to differ.

The Marshall-Newman Amendment, which states that only a union between one man and one woman may be a marriage recognized by the Commonwealth, was enacted in 2006. Although the amendment was eventually nullified through the federal ruling of *Obergefell v. Hodges* in 2015, which legalized same-sex marriage nationwide, it remains written in the state constitution. In the upcoming general election on Nov. 3, Question 2 of the constitutional amendments, would, if passed, rightfully repeal the ban on same-sex marriage. Virginia must pass this amendment for the acknowledgement of all marriages.

Specifically, the proposed amendment removes the one man and one woman limitation, replacing it with the assertion that “marriage is one of the vital personal rights essential to the orderly pursuit of happiness” — thus concluding marriages should be treated equally under the law regardless of sex, gender or race.

This amendment may seem unnecessary, as the ban on same-sex marriage is unenforceable as long as *Obergefell* stands — and the Supreme Court has fortunately shown minimal

interest in overturning that federal precedent. Yet, the importance of the ban’s removal resides not necessarily in tangible legislative benefits but in its symbolism. By rigidly defining valid, recognizable marriages as those of a man and a woman, the corollary is that those of the same-sex are invalid and inferior. This is antithetical to the state moniker which touts a place conducive to “loving.” Such aspira-

amendment quite un-American, for it conveniently excludes LGBTQ+ individuals and endows little respect for freedoms promised to every American.

Furthermore, the amendment would scrub away the ban’s reflection of the ignorant, outdated beliefs towards LGBTQ+ individuals of 20+ years ago. This creates a sharp dissonance to the more open-minded sen-

recognition. Such apprehension is rooted, aside from personal religious qualms, in a respect for upholding long-standing traditions. Specifically, the tradition of a nuclear family model — purported to offer both social and filial stability unlike same-sex couples. Not only is this logic painfully reminiscent of past justifications for interracial marriage bans, but it is also highly flawed. Based on 20 years

a man to wear still the coat which fitted him when a boy as civilized society to remain ever under the regimen of their barbarous ancestors.” I quote this to highlight the understanding that change is a practical imperative for society. From *Lawrence v. Texas* to the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” to *Obergefell*, America is a significantly safer, more welcoming place for LGBTQ+ individuals than in past times. This, then, is precisely why Virginia should discard the archaic attitudes — and amendments representative of them — which no longer suit the public sentiment, majority scientific opinion and societal progress of today.

Ultimately, pivotal moments and landmark legislation for LGBTQ+ individuals were not caused in a vacuum. Rather, they were created from symbolic action. From big leaps like the Stonewall Riots to small yet impactful steps like coming out, every instance of effort paved the way for progress. On Nov. 3, Virginians will have a unique opportunity to participate in this by voting for Question 2.

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Ultimately, pivotal moments and landmark legislation for LGBTQ+ individuals were not caused in a vacuum. Rather, they were created from symbolic.

tions of southern hospitality should not come with conditions like sexual orientation or gender.

These exclusionary implications contradict not only Virginian values but American rights — the rights of its citizens to authentically express themselves without being relegated to a status of inferiority. Although some see same-sex relationships as “un-American” for seemingly clashing with the traditional values often associated with the nation’s identity, America deeply values individual rights and freedoms. This, then, makes the Marshall-Newman

timents of the majority of Virginians today — 68 percent polled to support same-sex marriage in 2025. Understandably, that justification alone might raise fear among some that this amendment’s passing marks the tyranny of the modernized majority upon those who hold more conservative values. However, there is nothing tyrannical in simply expanding the definition of marriage to include their same-sex counterparts.

One’s discomfort and apprehension toward same-sex marriages are not legitimate grounds for denying these unions basic respect and

of data regarding same-sex marriage in America, researchers concluded that extending marriage and other forms of legal recognition to same-sex couples has been consistently positive for their children and the general population. Ironically, any instability faced by these relationships is a consequence of social unacceptance — like the ban — rather than an inherent flaw.

Moreover, change from tradition is not inherently bad — and in fact vital for progress. In the apt words of our university’s founder, Thomas Jefferson, “We might as well require

HUMOR

LIVE TRACKER: The 2026 U.Va. Dine summer offseason

Tracking major menu changes and other dining events ahead of the 2026-27 academic year

Editor’s note: This article is a humor column.

This page is no longer being updated.

While Virginia football and basketball have seen skyrocketing success over this past year, another University program has garnered little attention despite its omnipresence on Grounds — U.Va. Dine. Whether you’re talking about its quality or the very texture of its menu items, it is undeniable that U.Va. Dine has a strange consistency to it, and it’s high time that the student body give the contours of this program some dedicated attention.

Thus, for the first time ever, *The Cavalier Daily* will follow the arrivals and departures of U.Va. Dine’s menu items during this summer offseason. We sent the Sports desk’s hungriest editorialists into the University’s various dining halls and meal exchange locations to cover these monumental changes. While their reporting is impeccably accurate, we can’t quite get them to quit their secret sports lingo, so you’re just going to have to bear with us and trust that any mention

of portals isn’t foreshadowing for the next *Minecraft* movie.

June 1: Ms. Kathy — portal entry

After 24 years of service and love, Newcomb Dining Hall’s friendliest face is entering the transfer portal. Kathy McGruder told this reporter that she is considering other Atlantic Coast Conference dining halls.

“They say I ‘revolutionized swiping into the dining hall,’ so it’s about time I started capitalizing on that and banking some NIL money,” Ms. Kathy said. “I hear Durham is lovely this time of year.”

June 2: Ms. Kathy — recommitment

After 24 hours of fear and uncertainty, Kathy McGruder has reassured the University community and recommitted to Newcomb Dining Hall.

“I was just kidding, baby! I would never leave you all,” Ms. Kathy said.

June 19: The Strange Newcomb Substance That Isn’t Quite Ice Cream — portal entry

Virginia’s famous goop is going

portaling. The strange Newcomb substance that isn’t quite ice cream, which earned Third Meal All-ACC honors this year, could be gone. The substance fueled the Cavaliers and tied with Runk shakes in 2025 for the University’s Viscous Fluid of the Year award.

June 30: The Good Chicken Sandwiches — returner

A perennial summer favorite, the chicken sandwiches that are actually good have reappeared in Newcomb Hall just in time for orientation. Suspiciously similar to the sandwiches served in the shuttered Chick-Fil-A a floor below, this chicken offering is seldom seen by students during the school year — it is a mere coincidence that the auspicious arrival of these tendies corresponds with the only time all year that more than a handful of parents eat in a dining hall. June is simply when the chickens are ripe ... there are no ulterior motives!

July 8: The Observatory Hill Granola — commitment (to all of the other trays)

The Observatory Hill granola is back on the menu this summer ... and back on all of the other food trays on the self-service bar, too. While there are not as many granola-eating gerbil students around during the summer, there are still enough to scatter the stuff all over the yogurt and the apple sauce and the cream cheese and so on and so forth. You may even find it in your green, glowingly unripe banana!

July 29: Every Milk Machine — departure

Following the bi-yearly refill of the dining hall milk machines this past April, all of the U.Va. Dine milk machines have run out of their nectar once more. A few 2 percent milk dispensers held out until now, but this was only because they were spoiled yet not spoiled enough to warrant immediate concern. Just enough to have that sour tang to ‘em.

Aug. 7: The Gas — commitment

As the Prophecy foretold, the Mysterious Gas has arrived in Observatory Hill!

The Gas cannot be avoided.
The Gas cannot be bargained with.
Bon appetit, first years!

Aug. 7: The Gas — departure

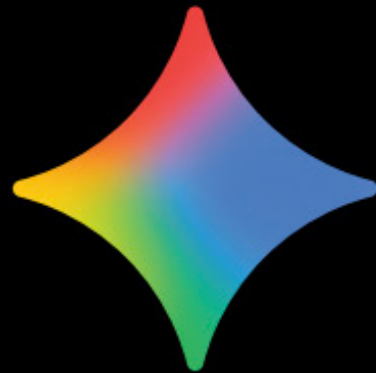
In defiance of the Prophecy, the Mysterious Gas has been reduced to nothing.

We know not the consequences of this insolence!

Aug. 10: The Good Chicken Sandwiches — departure

As orientation winds down and the Class of 2030 moves in, the Newcomb chicken sandwiches have flown the coop once again. Could it be Chick-Fil-A crowding out the Newcomb chicken market? Could it be U.Va. Dine’s punishment for banishing the Gas? We may never truly know.

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